



## Play and Leisure Functional / Manipulative Play

### Bilateral Hand Use

An important stage in the development of fine motor skills is the development of bilateral hand use. This is the use of two hands together to grasp and manipulate objects. This stage of development starts with bringing the hands together in the midline and develops to using one hand as the dominant hand and the other as a helping hand.



It is important when focusing on fine motor skills that your child is well supported and sitting in a stable position.

This will free them up to use their hands: even if you do not see your child propping with a hand in sitting, they will be using their arms and hands to balance. Examples of this would be sitting in their high chair or car seat and sitting on your knee.

With most activities start off doing them hand over hand with your child.

### Activity Ideas

- Construction toys e.g. Megablocks, Duplo, Lego. Start by pulling pieces apart and then move onto building. Build towers and once your child is confident encourage them to use their imagination to build whatever they want.
- Threading - use cotton reels and laces, dried pasta tubes and wool, large beads (or drinking/craft straws cut into pieces) and buttons onto thinner laces, lacing cards (or a piece of card with holes punched into it)
- Playdough - Practice rolling, flattening the playdough (see homemade recipe below) and using tools such as plastic knives, rolling pins, cookie cutters.  
**Please be aware that playdough (both shop bought and homemade) may contain wheat. Make sure you use a wheat free alternative if there is a known wheat allergy.**
- Water play - Spray plants, the windows or the pavement with a trigger type spray bottle. Use squeazy bath toys and squirters.
- Jigsaw puzzles - start simple e.g. 2 pieces and work up to more complex puzzles.
- Coin races - ask your child to place coins in a piggy bank (or a box with a slot cut in the lid). Encourage your child to pick up the coins with their “Tommy” thumb and “Peter Pointer” finger and use their helping hand to hold the piggy bank.





- Pegs races - ask your child to place clothes pegs on the side of an ice-cream tub as fast as they can. Encourage them to use their “Tommy” thumb and “Peter Pointer” finger to squeeze the pegs open. They should use their dominant hand to hold the pegs and their helping hand to hold the tub.
- Colouring in - this will help develop pencil control. Use thick, short crayons to help encourage a tripod grasp (adult grasp). Use pictures with a thick bold outline to colour over. Try tracing around the outline with their “Peter Pointer” finger before beginning colouring. Try to stay within the lines.



- Working at an easel - this works muscles against gravity and can help to improve grasp when using tools. Your child can paint, draw, and use chalk or any other media to create pictures.
- Craft activities - gluing and sticking are great fun. You could make collages with pieces of a magazine, dried pasta, rice, wool, string, tissue paper etc.
- Tongs and tweezers - Pick up items using tweezers and salad/kitchen tongs. Start with tongs and larger items e.g. balls of cotton wool or balled up tin foil or paper and move onto smaller items with tweezers.
- Scissors - snip with scissors; don't worry about cutting straight through a piece of paper at this stage. Try cutting: through a sausage of play dough, drinking straws, thick paper – snipping around the edge to make a “fringe”, corrugated card, craft or “Funky” foam sheets, bits of wool or string held tightly at either side by a grown-up.
- In the kitchen - Let your child try activities involving stirring, pressing, kneading, rolling out, measuring out, pouring, sieving, opening containers and using cookie cutters. It is likely to be a messy task so aprons at the ready!
- Self-care activities e.g. dressing and fastenings on clothes, using cutlery.
- Housework activities e.g. folding large sheets and towels, washing and drying the dishes, hanging up the clothes on the washing line.





2 cups of plain flour  
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil  
½ cup of salt  
2 tablespoons of cream of tartar  
Up to 1 ½ cups of boiling water  
Food colouring (optional)

Mix the dry ingredients and oil in a large mixing bowl, add the colouring to the boiling water (if using). Gradually add the water until it comes together. Once the mixture is cool get your child to knead the dough until the stickiness has gone.

The playdough should last for up to 6 months if stored in an air tight container.



## Playdough Recipe